

Building Readers®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

SHAPE Elementary School
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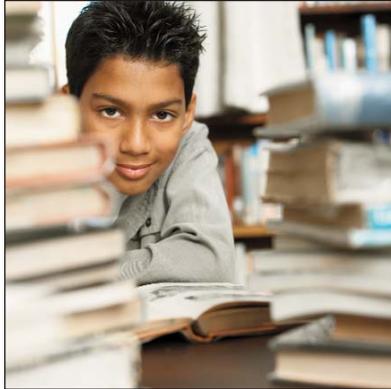
Prepare for research projects

Next time you visit the library, have your child imagine that he has to research a topic. Where would he look? What would he find? Practicing will help when school projects are assigned. Have him:

- **Choose a subject**—something he finds exciting. Then have him ask the librarian about it. For example, “Where can I find information about race cars?”
- **Use resources**, such as the library catalog. Show your child how books and other materials are organized. (Libraries usually divide books into sections such as reference, children’s books and more.) Together, locate what you’re looking for.
- **Read a nonfiction book** about the topic (he will be using nonfiction books when he does research for school). Consider taking home a fiction book on the same topic.

Source: “How to Use the Public Library to Help You Teach Your Elementary Schooler Reading,” eHow, www.ehow.com/how_2036505_library-elementary-reading.html.

“To read a book for the first time is to make an acquaintance with a new friend; to read it for a second time is to meet an old one.”
—Chinese Saying



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Encourage your child to exchange reading suggestions



Parents often ask teachers and librarians which books are best for kids. As kids get older, there’s another great source of information: classmates! Your child can ask friends, “What’s your favorite book?” or “Have you read any cool books lately?” Or she can recommend books to others. When kids read the same books, they can discuss them, too, which builds important reading comprehension skills.

Know how to read online



The Internet is a fun place to read. But before you go online with your child, get some helpful advice. One source is the American Library Association. At their site, www.ala.org, find “Especially for Young People and Their Parents.” It includes plenty of tips and links.

Know what to expect from reading practice

Your child has to practice reading at home, but you aren’t sure how difficult this should be. Should she choose books with lots of challenging words or books that are easy to read? Consider these guidelines:

- **Between ages five and eight**, books should use common, simple words. By third grade, storylines and information may be more complex. Most words should be familiar. But some should be challenging.
- **For kids ages nine and up**, it’s especially important to consider the child’s personality. Choose books with subjects that really interest your child. If a book is fascinating, but the words are too frustrating, read it aloud to her during free time.

Source: “Choosing a Child’s Book,” Reading Rockets, www.readingrockets.org/article/62.

Make the most of library visits



These days, kids often visit the library for story times, shows, activities and more. Fun events inspire kids to read more.

Plan to browse library shelves before you leave. If your child recently enjoyed a television show about pet tricks, for example, find a book about training a pet. If your child loved listening to a book read during story time, check it out—or find another by the same author.

Boost thinking by discussing books

Your child has just finished a book, and you want him to review and share what he's learned. Instead of asking him to write a report, do something simple and natural: Have a conversation. You can:

- **Discuss the book one-on-one.** Consider reading the book yourself to make the talk more lively.
- **Have a family discussion.** Suggest that everyone read the book. Gather to share your views.
- **Start a book club.** Join other families in choosing what to read. Then meet regularly to discuss the selections.

Source: Jim Trelease, *The Read-Aloud Handbook*, ISBN: 0-14-303739-0 (Penguin Books, www.penguin.com).

Make sure your child has the 'write' stuff

Writing is an important part of reading. It helps kids understand how authors come up with their stories—and can encourage them to write their own. Ask your child to become the family reporter. She can write about:

- **A sporting event.** Whether it's a sibling's little league game or a professional game, the sights and sounds should give your child plenty of material. What was the most exciting part of the game?
- **A family member.** Help your child think of some questions to ask a relative. What did he do as a child? What toys did he like best? What was school like?



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After your child gathers her information, she is ready to write. When she's finished, help her check her spelling and grammar. "Print" her completed article in a family newsletter or send copies to family and friends.



Q: My child's second-grade teacher says it's especially important for third graders to read well. Why is this?

A: It's common to hear that before third grade, kids are *learning to read*, and by the end of third grade, they are *reading to learn*. If your child is struggling to read, discuss this with the teacher as soon as possible.

Source: "Questions About Reading Instruction," National Institute for Literacy, www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/questions/questions_about.html.

Do you have a question about reading? Email readingadvisor@parent-institute.com.



For lower elementary readers:

Martha Speaks by Susan Meddaugh (Houghton Mifflin). Who knew that feeding a dog alphabet soup could cause so much commotion? Now Martha the dog can talk, and the results are amusing.

The Chalk Box Kid by Clyde Robert Bulla (Random House). Life is hard for nine-year-old Gregory. But things change when he discovers an abandoned chalk factory nearby.

For upper elementary readers:

The Trumpet of the Swan by E.B. White (HarperTrophy). A boy's appreciation for nature leads to a silent trumpeter swan. In this classic book, a real trumpet gives the swan a voice.

Frintle by Andrew Clements (Simon & Schuster). Fifth-grader Nick wants to add a new word to the English language: *frindle*. This big idea gets an even bigger response.

Make vocabulary words appealing with quizzes



Taking quizzes usually isn't a hobby. But at Fact Monster online, the daily "Word Quiz" is fun. Kids see a new word. They hear it spoken. Then they guess its meaning from three options. To find the quiz, go to www.factmonster.com. Click "Word Wise" and then "Word Quiz." There's a new quiz every day. Your child will build his vocabulary while having fun!

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